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JOURNEY AROUND LAKE CONEMAUGH

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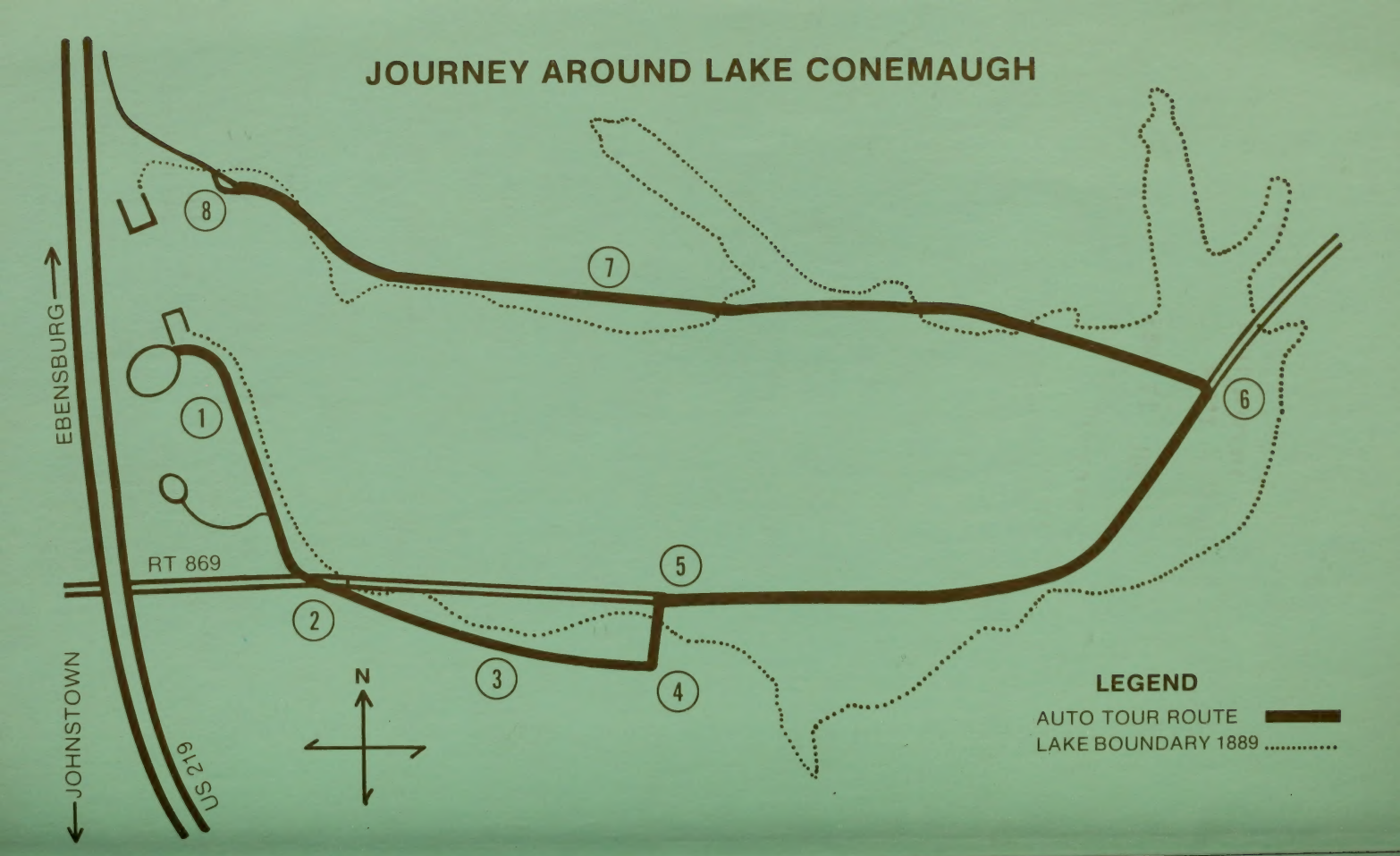
JOURNEY AROUND LAKE CONEMAUGH
EBENSBURG
JOHNSTOWN
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LEGEND
AUTO TOUR ROUTE
LAKE BOUNDARY 1889

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The three mile drive to the North Abutment of South Fork Dam can be both historical and enjoyable. On the way, you will pass the 1889 Clubhouse as well as some of the summer cottages that were part of the South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club. You will also get a chance to drive along a peaceful country road where you may see a variety of wildlife and many other wonders of nature. Your journey around Lake Conemaugh will enable you to physically trace almost the entire boundary of the lake, as it existed in 1889 so you can appreciate its size. Please drive safely and watch for traffic and pedestrians.

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1. AS YOU LEAVE THE PARKING LOT, RETURN TO THE ENTRANCE GATE. (.5 Mile)

In 1889, the area immediately to your left would have been under water as part of Lake Conemaugh. The two and one-half mile long lake served as a resort for the members of the South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club during the years 1879 to 1889. Club members were wealthy Pittsburgh industrialists who wanted to retreat from a smoky city during the hot summer months. Members and their guests were the only ones allowed to use the lake and its facilities. Many business deals were made along the banks of Lake Conemaugh. On summer days, one would see horses and buggies traveling back and forth to the Clubhouse area.

2. TURN LEFT AT THE PARK ENTRANCE AND THEN BEAR TO THE RIGHT AT THE FIRST STREET TO THE RIGHT. (.1 Mile — Total .6)

This is part of the original road that led to the Clubhouse area of the lake. As you ride along, sixteen cottages lined the street on your right. The club members enjoyed excellent fishing and boating on Lake Conemaugh on your left.

3. THE CLUBHOUSE IS ON YOUR RIGHT AND IS MARKED "1889 CLUBHOUSE." IT IS THE LARGE GRAY BUILDING WITH LATTICE WORK ON THE PORCH. (.3 Mile — Total .9)

The Clubhouse must have been impressive in its day. With 47 rooms it could accommodate members and club guests who did not want a cottage. There was a huge dining room that seated 150 people at one time. It was a common rule that club members took their meals at the Clubhouse. Although the Clubhouse is smaller than in 1889 (the south wing no longer stands), it was truely a proper resort.

4. TWO OF THE ORIGINAL COTTAGES LOCATED AT THE BEND IN THE ROAD JUST UP AHEAD. (ONE IS WHITE WITH BLUE TRIM. ONE IS RED.) THESE ARE PRIVATE RESIDENCES SO PLEASE RESPECT THE OWNERS' PRIVACY. (.1 Mile — Total 1.0)

These cottages still appear much as they did in 1889. They reflect the architectural trend of the 1880's of the "Queen Anne" style. Looking at them one can hardly call these three-story 17 room buildings "cottages"! These homes still show the elegance of the past.

AT THIS POINT, CONTINUE ON THE PAVED ROAD TO YOUR LEFT.

5. AT THE END OF THIS ROAD, TURN RIGHT. YOU ARE AGAIN ON PA. ROUTE 869. (.1 Mile — Total 1.1)

You are now below the water line of Lake Conemaugh. St. Michael, a town of approximately 500 people, grew up around the Club's buildings when coal mining developed in this area after 1889.

6. TAKE THE FIRST LEFT OFF PA. 869, JUST BEYOND ST. MICHAEL CATHOLIC CHURCH. DRIVE CAREFULLY AND SLOWLY FOR THIS LEFT TURN IS NOT MARKED. (.6 Mile — Total 1.7)

This left turn is the only left turn on this road, so if you miss it, don't worry. You can turn around at the Forest Hill High School ahead, which marks the end of the lake. After you make the turn, proceed across the bridge and railroad tracks and continue on this road. (Caution: Be alert for trains when crossing the several sets of railroad tracks.)

7. FOR THE NEXT TEN MINUTES, YOU WILL BE DRIVING DOWN THE NORTH SIDE OF THE LAKE. (1.4 Mile — Total 3.1)

The lake bed is to your left. Refer to the map to imagine where the shoreline would be. Also watch for wildlife. It is not uncommon to see deer, rabbits, groundhogs (woodchucks) and birds along this road.

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Along the way, you will pass through the "Park of 1889." The Adams-Croyle Recreation Authority established this park in 1977 as an ongoing effort with the National Park Service to preserve the remaining lake bed and shoreline from further development.

8. IN ABOUT A MILE AND A QUARTER (1¼) THIS ROAD WILL FORK. TAKE THE LEFT FORK. DRIVE DOWN THIS ROAD TO THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE SIGN. PLEASE PARK YOUR VEHICLE IN THE SMALL LOT PROVIDED.

You can now take a walk up to the spillway and the North Abutment. This spillway became clogged with debris and played a major role in the dam's breaking. From the observation point at the end of the abutment, you will be able to see the Clubhouse roof in St. Michael, which was just about the half-way mark of Lake Conemaugh. This will help you visualize the immenseness of the lake. It certainly was a fantastic recreation-vacation spot!

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Your journey around Lake Conemaugh is now over. Relax and enjoy the view. Let your imagination wander. Picture yourself as a wealthy club member coming to spend the summer on beautiful Lake Conemaugh. Also try to remember all you have seen and heard at your visit to the Johnstown Flood National Memorial. Man's negligence caused a great "natural" disaster. Tipping the balance of nature, without understanding what we have done, can result in far-reaching consequences.

History is full of examples where man did not understand his environment and as a result has suffered. History points out that more times than not, man fails to learn from these tragic experiences and so history is repeated over and over again. Can you think of any examples where this has happened? Will we let it happen again? When will we learn? We must find answers because it is then and only then we will live in harmony with our environment.

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TO RETURN TO ROUTE U.S. 219, RETRACE YOUR PATH TO ROUTE PA. 869. TURN RIGHT ON PA. 869 TO ROUTE U.S. 219. WHEN YOU GO THROUGH ST. MICHAEL, IF YOU LOOK TO YOUR LEFT, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO SEE THE CLUBHOUSE FROM A FULL FRONT VIEW. WE HOPE YOU ENJOYED JOURNEY AROUND LAKE CONEMAUGH.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

JOHNSTOWN FLOOD NATIONAL MEMORIAL

c/o Allegheny Portage Railroad
National Historic Site

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